Welcome to Story Station U on 89-3 WGSU, Geneseo's Voice of the Valley, your local radio broadcast where campus life meets American headlines! I'm your host, Madilyn Becker, and I'll be breaking down the recent news that could change your weekend plans- or maybe your future! Don't forget: you can follow along with tonight's script and read all of my sources online at the WGSU website!

Thank you all for joining me for another semester of Story Station U! Do you have any thoughts on the show, questions you've been wanting to ask me, or any news story you want me to cover? Good news! You can now email me about all things Story Station U! Email me at storystationu@gmail.com to get in touch! Again, that's ''story station, with a lowercase letter u'' at gmail.com. I would love to hear from you!

News waits for no one, so let's get into our first headline tonight!

Earlier this month, President Donald Trump announced his plans to reinvent the board of operations for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., starting with naming himself as board chairman.The center was first proposed in 1950, and has since hosted the National Symphony, the Washington Opera, Broadway touring companies, and several other different genres of musical performances. The center's white, marble building is also recognized as a national monument. However, its power is not only recognized in the U.S. President Kennedy brought the Ballet Nacional de Cuba to the center for their first performance in the United States at the height of the Cold War in 1948. In his speech at a 1962 fundraising event for the Kennedy Center, President Kennedy declared, "Art knows no national boundaries. Genius can speak in any tongue, and the entire world will hear it. And listen". The center's board of directors has historically been bipartisan, with its programming board including influences from all music genres, from bluegrass, to hip-hop. President Trump took to Truth Social on February 8th, 2025, writing, "At my direction, we are going to make the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. great again". His message went on to explain that he would be firing individuals on the board that do not share his vision for a ''golden age in arts and culture". The president ended his post by writing, "Just last year, the Kennedy Center featured drag shows specifically targeting our youth- THIS WILL STOP". Arts critic, Bob Mondello, wrote an article published by NPR about the president's claims surrounding the Kennedy Center. He wrote that the center hosted multiple drag shows last year, but that they were all aimed at adult audiences. Also according to Mondello, the center received a letter from two republican congressmen, Christopher Smith and John Moolenaar, accusing the center of "subsidizing Chinese Communist Party propaganda", after it hosted performances by the National Ballet of China. However, the Kennedy Center has been hosting international dance groups for years, including the Ballet Nacional de Cuba and the Russian Bolshoi Ballet, both of which performed at the center during The Cold War. After taking the chairman position himself, President Trump named his foreign policy advisor, and former United States Director of National Intelligence, Richard Grenell, to serve as the interim executive director of the Kennedy Center. Grenell has been a long time loyalist to Donald Trump. Fulton Armstrong, a former senior analyst at the CIA, spoke about Grenell, saying: "Grenell's very cunning and effective. Having penetrated both the intelligence and the policy world, he knows who can be seduced, intimidated, and destroyed".

Our next headline is President Trump's cuts to the United States Department of Education. This department was created by congress in 1979 and has an annual budget of almost eighty million dollars. It is in charge of several aspects of American schools, such as funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which sends money to public school districts to help provide services for students with disabilities. The Department of Education is also responsible for giving students access to federal aid for college and university, and collecting and maintaining data from U.S. colleges and universities, which gives students and their families access to information such as graduation and admission rates and need-based aid eligibility. The Institute of Education Sciences is a branch of the Department of Education responsible for gathering data on subjects such as research-backed teaching techniques and U.S. student achievement levels. President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency has named this branch as the first to see significant cuts. According to NPR News, many employees' contracts have already been terminated as a result of The Department of Government Effeciency's orders. An anonymous source claiming to be extremely familiar with the Department of Education told NPR that one program being run by The Institute of Education Sciences, which has already begun to be implemented in many classrooms across the U.S., has been terminated along with these employees' contracts. This program was reportedly aimed at helping students learn topics in math, to help make up for the decreasing levels of math understanding seen in students nationwide. According to a study published by The National Center for Education Statistics, test scores for American fourth graders decreased by eighteen points in math, while test scores for American eighth graders dropped twenty-seven points in math, between the years 2019 and 2023. Also highlighted in this study was the consistent gender gap between students in math and science subjects. In 2023, both fourth and eighth grade male students out-performed their female classmates on math tests.

Our next story tonight also concerns many young people in America. On January 28th, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled: Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation. This order aimed to limit young citizens' access to gender affirming medical care, including puberty blockers and cross-sex hormone therapy medications. The president's executive order defines ''child'' as anyone ''under 19 years of age". According to this order, many gender affirming medical procedures will be unavailable to anyone younger than nineteen. Several cities such as Seattle, New York, and Los Angeles have seen protests outside of children's hospitals that canceled appointments for transgender care after the president's order. Many hospitals such as, but not limited to, NYU Langone, UCHealth in Denver, Colorado, and Children's National in Washington, D.C, received an order from the president to immediately cancel gender affirming care appointments. However, the legality of this executive order has caused confusion and raised questions nationwide. According to the Human Right Campaign's official website, the order removes coverage from gender affirming care from many healthcare policies, modifies requirements surrounding this care under the Affordable Care Act, and prevents hospitals that currently receive federal funding for research regarding gender affirming care for young people to perform these procedures any longer. American Civil Liberties Union, or ACLU, senior counsel, Joshua Block, spoke on the legal challenges of President Trump's executive order. Block explained "congress has passed laws

prohibiting hospitals and health centers that receive federal funds from discriminating against patients on the basis of sex, and courts have found that those protections extend to transgender patients". The ACLU filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration regarding this order. The day after the suit was filed, fifteen attorneys from several states issued warnings to hospitals that cancelling transgender healthcare appointments would be a violation of state anti-discrimination laws. This executive order is still being battled in court, largely due to the fact that many programs implicated have ties to Medicare and Medicaid, which provide funding to nearly every hospital in America. While the legal battle continued, protesters' signs could be seen at a recent rally in Union Square in New York City. Notable signs read, "I don't need the president's permission to be myself" and "protect trans rights". If you are a SUNY Geneseo student in need of someone to talk to about managing stress, mental health, and coping with news, the Geneseo Pathways phone number can be found on SUNY Geneseo's official website. Pathways is a confidential, peer-to-peer program featuring trained Geneseo student peer advocates. If you need someone to talk to, but are not a SUNY Geneseo student, the Suicide and Crisis hotline is available 24/7 by texting or calling 988. The Trevor Project, a non-profit organization aimed at benefiting LGBTQ+, has their own crisis hotline, also available by call and text 24/7. Contact information can be found on thetrevorproject.org.

It is time to discuss our next headline of the night. Do you have some stray pennies laying in the bottom of your wallet, or in the cupholders of your car? President Trump wants to eliminate them. Not to help Americans tidy up their wallets and cars, but for a more serious reason. The president posted a statement on Truth Social this past weekend, explaining that pennies cost more than two cents to produce, and that he sees this as a waste of America's budget. His newly appointed Department of Government Efficiency wasted no time after his inauguration in January to attack the penny. The department revealed that pennies cost American taxpayers over one-hundred and seventy-nine million dollars in 2023 alone. According to the U.S. Mint, a bureau of the Department of Treasury, stated in their annual report for 2024 that pennies are worth less than they cost to produce. The report explains that the department lost over eighty-five million dollars on the total amount of pennies produced in 2024, which was nearly 3.2 billion. Also according to the U.S. Mint, 2024 was the 19th consecutive year that pennies cost more to make than their face value. Although most Americans easily disregard a penny as simply being worth one cent, some economy-experts argue that the impact of pennies could be much more. Mark Weller, a public affairs and advocacy expert, and the executive director of Americans for Common Cents, an organization aimed at lobbying to keep pennies in circulation, told NPR that "the alternative to the penny is rounding to the nickel". He explained that this would "negatively impact" Americans when purchasing a gallon of gas or milk. Americans for Common Cents also argues that President Trump's plan to save the U.S. money by ending penny production would, in reality, lead to even larger losses for the U.S. Mint. The organization argues that because the U.S. Mint would have to produce more nickels in response to the loss of pennies, the department would be spending even more money on coin production. Other than getting everyone to agree that penny production should end, President Trump will face a second challenge in ending pennies. It would likely take an act of congress to end the minting of pennies. The U.S. Mint is a part of the U.S. Department of Treasury, which derives its

power from the U.S. congress. According to NPR, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has not commented on the president's proposed plans for coin production.

Tonight's next headline is an event that makes pop culture headlines nearly every year: The Superbowl Halftime Show. This year, rapper Kendrick Lamar took the stage to perform some of his biggest hits. However, his performance made more than just pop culture headlines. Lamar's performance carried strong political messages. Before Lamar sang a word, American actor, Samual L. Jackson, appeared on stage to introduce him. Jackson introduced the rapper by saying "this is the great American game". Both Lamar fans and journalists have spectated that this was a reference to American media often silencing or controlling how black artists express themselves. In another appearence on stage, Jackson, a black man himself, dressed as the iconic Uncle Sam, and told Lamar that his performance was ''too ghetto''. He continued to ask Lamar: "do you even know how to play this game?", referencing the great American game he mentioned earlier in the performance. This seemed to reflect how many black American citizens feel afraid to express themselves due to concerns of being labeled ''ghetto'' or ''unprofessional''. As Jackson stepped off-stage, and Lamar continued his high-energy performance, his dancers covered the stage, wearing red, white, and blue. During Lamar's performance of his hit song, "HUMBLE.", his dancers stood around him, their positions based on what color they were wearing, and formed an image of an American flag. The rapper soon stepped in-between the dancers, seemingly dividing the American flag image into two, separate sides. This comes at a time when political and racial divisions are often talked about in America. During Lamar's performance of his three-time Grammy award-winning song, ''Not Like Us", tennis player, Serena Williams, a four-time Olympic gold medalist, danced on stage. Fans quickly recognized her doing a specific dance, often referred to as a ''C-walk". The dance originated in the 1970s in Compton, California, the city where both Lamar and Williams grew up. In 2012, after winning an Olympic medal, Williams ''C-walked'' in celebration. Although the dance has been adopted in many forms of media, as well as in the sports industry, Williams was heavily criticzised due to the dance's origin in gang culture. The dance has since, however, been adopted by many African American sports and music figures as a way to represent their homes in California, specifically the city of Compton and Los Angelos county, and the culture of growing up in historically black neighborhoods. This moment tied closely into the overall theme of Lamar's Halftime performance: unapologetically representing black culture in America.

Our last story tonight comes right from the State University of New York, otherwise known as SUNY, system. The SUNY Student Assembly, known as the SUNY SA, unveiled their new ''Students' Agenda". This agenda was created with input from students across the SUNY system. The agenda covers the most pressing challenges facing public education in New York state. The SUNY system provides an education to approximately 1.3 million students, and this agenda aims to "strengthen campuses, expand critical resources, and ensure that every student- regardless of background- has the support they need to succeed", according to Giovanni Harvey, SUNY SA President. Harvey further explains that he, and all of the SUNY Student Assembly, feel that revising the Excelsior Scholarship and expanding acess to beneficial programs within the SUNY system, are crucial to keeping State Universities of New

York affordable and accessible. The SUNY SA assures students in the SUNY system that they are committed to ensuring ‘’growth and improvement” within the SUNY system.

Before I end tonight’s show, I want to highlight this week’s moment of good news! Earlier this month, the world’s smallest heart pump was approved by the FDA for use in children. This tiny device has already saved adults’ lives, and medical professionals are extremely opptimistic and confident in its potential to save even more lives. The pump is called the Impella 5.5 and is no bigger than a fountain pen. It is so small, they it can be implanted without completely opening the patient’s chest, saving their life in times of heart failure. Katrina Penney was born with congenital heart defects; when she was nineteen years old, she received a heart transplant. However, this transplant was not successful. For five weeks after the failed transplant, the Impella 5.5 kept Penney alive. The device kept the failed heart pumping while a second transplant was secured. Dr. Katsuhide Maeda from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, where Penney was treated, told CBS News that the Impella 5.5 is ‘’a game-changer”.

That’s our top headlines for tonight, but the world never stops spinning and news never stops breaking, so join me again next Tuesday, same place, same time for all of your top headlines! Don’t forget you can read my script and see all of tonight’s sources on WGSU’s website! And don’t forget, you can email me about all things Story Station U at storystationu@gmail.com! Thank you again for joining me tonight. I’m your host, Madilyn Becker, and I’ll talk to you next week on 89-3 WGSU, Geneseo’s Voice of the Valley!